

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) A prophylactic HCV vaccine composition for preventing chronic HCV infection comprising a prophylactically effective amount of at least one HCV ~~single or specific oligomeric~~ envelope E1 protein or a part thereof; and at least one of a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, adjuvant or vehicle wherein said HCV envelope E1 protein or part thereof is a single or specific oligomeric protein not disulfide linked with contaminants.

17. (Currently Amended) A prophylactic HCV vaccine composition for preventing chronic HCV infection comprising a prophylactically effective amount of a combination of at least two HCV ~~single or specific oligomeric~~ envelope E1 proteins or parts thereof wherein said at least two E1 proteins or parts thereof are single or specific oligomeric proteins not disulfide linked with contaminants and are derived from different HCV genotypes, subtypes or isolates; and at least one of a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, adjuvant or vehicle.

Claims 18-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) The prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17 ~~16 to 19~~ wherein said E1 protein is E1s.

21. (Currently Amended) The prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17 ~~16 to 19~~ wherein said E1 protein or part thereof is produced by a recombinant host.

22. (Previously Presented) The prophylactic HCV composition according to claim 21 wherein said recombinant host is a recombinant mammalian cell, a recombinant yeast cell or a recombinant virus.

23. (Currently Amended) The prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17 ~~16 to 19~~ which is capable of eliciting protection of a mammal against subsequent chronic infection with a HCV genotype or subtype homologous to the HCV genotype or subtype, or HCV genotypes or subtypes, from which said E1 protein or proteins, or parts thereof, are derived.

24. (Currently Amended) The prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17 ~~16 to 19~~ which is capable of eliciting protection of a mammal against subsequent chronic infection with a HCV genotype or subtype heterologous the HCV genotype or subtype, or HCV genotypes or subtypes, from which said E1 protein or proteins, or parts thereof, are derived.

25. (Currently Amended) The prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17~~16 to 19~~ wherein the cysteines of said HCV envelope E1 proteins or parts thereof are blocked.

26. (Currently Amended) The prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17~~16 to 19~~ to which said HCV envelope E1 proteins or parts thereof are added as ~~viral-like~~ particles.

27. (Currently Amended) A method for inducing an immune response in a non-HCV-infected mammal comprising administering a prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17~~15 to 19~~ to said mammal.

28. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 27 wherein said immune response is a humoral and/or a cellular immune response.

29. (Currently Amended) A method of preventing evolution to chronic infection of a challenge HCV infection in a mammal comprising administering an effective amount of a prophylactic HCV composition according to claim 16~~claim 15~~ prior to said challenge HCV infection.

Claim 30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently Amended) A method of preventing evolution to chronic infection of a challenge HCV infection in a mammal comprising administering an effective amount of a prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17~~16 to 19~~ prior to said challenge HCV infection.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting a mammal against a challenge HCV infection comprising administering an effective amount of a prophylactic HCV composition according to any of claims 16 to 17~~16 to 19~~ prior to said challenge HCV infection.

33. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 31 wherein said challenge HCV infection is an infection with a HCV of a genotype or subtype homologous or heterologous to the HCV genotype or subtype, or HCV genotypes or subtypes, from which the E1 protein or part thereof comprised in said composition are derived.

34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein said challenge HCV infection is an infection with a HCV of a genotype or subtype homologous or heterologous to the HCV genotype or subtype, or HCV genotypes or subtypes, from which the E1 protein or part thereof comprised in said composition are derived.

35. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 29 ~~or 30~~ wherein said mammal is a human.

36. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 31 wherein said mammal is a human.

37. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein said mammal is a human.

38. (Previously Presented) The prophylactic HCV composition according to claim 23 wherein said mammal is a human.

39. (Previously Presented) The prophylactic HCV composition according to claim 24 wherein said mammal is a human.